
THE TORCHBEARER

The Newsletter of the Church of St. John of Damascus, Dedham, MA

January/February 2007

The Nativity Sermon of St John Chrysostom

"I behold a new and wondrous mystery! My ears resound to the shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but loudly chanting a heavenly hymn! The angels sing! The archangels blend their voices in harmony! The cherubim resound their joyful praise! The Seraphim exalt His glory!

All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead herein... on earth and man in heaven. He who is above now, for our salvation, dwells here below; and we, who were lowly, are exalted by divine mercy!

Today Bethlehem resembles heaven, hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices and, in place of the sun, witnessing the rising of the Sun of Justice!

Ask not how this is accomplished, for where God wills, the order of nature is overturned. For He willed He had the powers He descended. He saved. All things move in obedience to God.

Today He Who Is, is born! And He Who Is becomes what He was not! For when He was God, He became man-while not relinquishing the Godhead that is His...

And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him angels, nor archangels, nor thrones, nor dominions, nor powers, nor principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.

Yet He has not forsaken His angels, nor left them deprived of His care, nor because of His incarnation has He ceased being God. And behold kings have come, that they might serve the Leader of the Hosts of Heaven; Women, that they might adore Him Who was born of a woman so that He might change the pains of childbirth into joy; Virgins, to the Son of the Virgin. Infants, that they may adore Him who became a little child, so that out of the mouths of infants He might perfect praise; Children, to the Child who raised up martyrs through the rage of Herod; Men, to Him who became man that He might heal the miseries of His servants;

Shepherds, to the Good Shepherd who was laid down His life for His sheep; Priests, to Him who has become a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek; Servants, to Him who took upon Himself the form of a servant, that He might bless our stewardship with the reward of freedom (Philippians 2:7); Fishermen, to the Fisher of humanity;

Publicans, to Him who from among them named a chosen evangelist; Sinful women, to Him who exposed His feet to the tears of the repentant woman; And that I may embrace them all together, all sinners have come, that they may look upon the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! Since, therefore, all rejoice, I too desire to rejoice! I too wish to share the choral dance, to celebrate the festival! But I take my part, not plucking the harp nor with the music of the pipes nor holding a torch, but holding in my arms the cradle of Christ!

For this is all my hope! This is my life! This is my salvation! This is my pipe, my harp! And bearing it I come, and having from its power received the gift of speech, I too, with the angels and shepherds, sing: "Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace to men of good will!"

Church Records...

"As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ"

- ❖ Hannah Sadie, daughter of Robert and Carole (Rothenberger) Philson of Longwood, FL, was baptized on October 15th.
- ❖ Olivia Carla, daughter of Carl and Mary (Solomon) Topjian of Westwood, was baptized on October 22nd.
- ❖ Alexandra Ida, daughter of Andrew and Jennifer (Kassatly) Lavigne of Wilmington, was baptized on October 22nd.

Many Years!



From the Executive Board...

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We have enjoyed another exciting period since my last communication.

Another record breaking bazaar was the result of hard work and dedication of many volunteers from across our church organizations and all of our parishioners. Young and old alike gave of their time, talents, and hard work to ensure a very joyous and memorable bazaar. On behalf of Father John and the entire Executive Board, we would like to thank all who supported and contributed to the preparations for the bazaar, all that provided the many donations to the highly successful auction, the white elephant table, the raffles, and throughout the bazaar, and all those who came to partake in and enjoy the many offerings of the bazaar. We offer our sincere gratitude and a special thanks to Debbie and Charley Greenstein whose extraordinary efforts as co-chairs of our 2006 bazaar ensured its success.

In preparation for the bazaar, the Bazaar Kitchen Committee procured two new smaller barbeque grills for the kitchen in replacement for the one large existing grill, which has come to the end of its useful life. The smaller grills proved their value during the bazaar by offering the benefits of: more flexibility and temperature control, improved protection from the elements (wind, rain), similar size cooking surfaces to the existing larger grill, and space and storage efficiency. We express a special thanks to the Parent Guild for covering the costs of one of the two new grills.

We thank our Finance Committee, chaired by Kathleen Tawa, who have worked diligently in the successful development of a 2007 operating budget for our Church.

The entire board is working to identify innovative ways to raise the needed funds for the church. For instance the board is considering renting seven classrooms and an office to a local school in Needham. Additionally the board is working to improve the use of the halls by offering hall rentals for business use to such businesses as National Field & Focus in Framingham. To this end, we will start advertising the availability of the halls for rental. The board is also considering numerous other fundraising activities, including various sales and promotions on Sundays, and bringing back ballroom dancing once or twice a month. In honor of the 100th year anniversary of St. John of Damascus Church, the board has commissioned two committees to raise funds: 1) the 100th year anniversary book committees co-chaired by Mitch and John Haddad; and 2) the 100th year fundraising committee chaired by Alan Cardoos. Similarly, the advisory and social committees are working closely with a newly formed committee to identify ways to raise the necessary funds to implement the much needed improvements defined in the capital improvement plan. We ask for your participation on these committees. If you are interested in joining one of these committees or in helping with fundraising for our beloved church, please contact Gail Kurker or Mike O'Hara

We have embarked on our exciting new stewardship campaign. The Stewardship Committee has worked tirelessly to investigate

and develop a stewardship program for St. John of Damascus. They have arranged training that commenced in September during and after church services. New pledge forms and information packets will be mailed to all parishioners in November. The committee is working to make contributing easier for all of us by using electronic funds transfer and wire transfers for pledges. The committee will publish a pledge list and volunteers will follow-up with phone calls in January and February. We wish to thank Debbie Greenstein, Christine Bezreh, and Elizabeth Mac Neil for their hard work and dedication to making stewardship a reality for the Church of St. John of Damascus.

We are in need of a Bar and Hall Rental Committee. If you are interested in chairing this committee or joining this or any one of our many church committees please contact Gail Kurker or Mike O'Hara.

We are also in need of sponsors for the Sunday coffee hours, to include setup and clean up of the kitchen and hall. Coffee hours are an important part of our beloved church socialization and parishioner camaraderie. We beseech you to do your part to support this important function.

We will communicate with the parish members on a regular basis *via* the newsletter and e-mail to keep you apprised of the progress of activities and to mark key accomplishments of the parish.

On behalf of the Board, we thank you for taking the time to read this letter and look forward to a successful year forged by your

attendance at church and participation on one or more of our committees.

We wish all of you good health and happiness throughout the Holiday season and hope to see all of you at the New Year's Eve Party. With eternal love in Christ, Gail Kurker & Mike O'Hara

From the Treasurer of the Executive Board Kathleen Tawa.....

On Oct 11th The Finance Committee of St. John of Damascus met to review the fees assessed for Weddings, Funerals and Baptisms. At the November 13th Executive Board Meeting the recommendations of the Finance Committee were voted on and the following fees were approved, which will be effective on January 1, 2007.

For parishioners in good financial standing with St. John of Damascus, the schedules of fees are:

Funerals

- ❖ Use of church for wake: \$350 (this assumes one session)
- ❖ Chanter: \$75
- ❖ Sexton (if wake is held at church): \$75
- ❖ Use of church hall for mercy meal: regular hall rental charge applies.
- ❖ No Fee for Funeral in Church
- ❖ Priest: Personal discretion

For non-parishioners or parishioner (deceased) *not in good financial standing* with St. John of Damascus a \$500 fee for the funeral in the church would apply and \$350 for the wake, if held at the church.

Weddings

- ❖ Church: \$150
- ❖ Chanter: \$75
- ❖ Sexton: \$75
- ❖ Priest: Personal discretion

Baptisms

- ❖ Church: A suggested Donation of \$100
- ❖ Priest: Personal discretion

For parishioners *not in good financial standing* with St. John of Damascus a \$500 fee for a wedding or a baptism, which would be applied toward the parishioner stewardship offering, will be assessed.

As always, please feel to contact Fr. John, Gail Kurker, the Executive Board Chair, or myself should you have questions.

From the Centennial Committee...

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

The wheels of our centennial year celebration are in full gear and our committees are working very hard to come up with ideas to make our 100th year one to remember.

We're starting off the year with the New Year's Eve party in our church hall. Ray and Sheila Hamwey are chairing this event. It is shaping up to be a wonderful event to kick off our 100th year together as a parish. If you would like to help out with this event, please contact one of the co-chairs.

We desperately need all of you to step up and get on board with one of our committees. They are:

New Year's Eve Party chaired by Ray and Sheila Hamwey

Ad Book Committee chaired by Mitch and John Haddad.

Sponsorship Committee chaired by Alan Cardoos.

Gala Committee chaired by Mark and Cynthia Haddad.

Historic Committee chaired by Wayne Zahka.

Marketing Committee chaired by Michael Jabbour.

Please call the church office for contact information.

Please help these hard workers out by contacting them and offering up your help. They would greatly appreciate it.

I am asking once again for any old photographs, videos, or any other artifacts that have something to do with an event of the past at one of the three St. John of Damascus churches.

As chairman of our Centennial Year Celebration I urge you all to get involved. The history of our parish includes all of us. Lets continue our memories from this day forward. Sincerely, Tom Sabbag, Chairman

From the History Committee...

I need help from our Parishioners. I'm looking for documents, photographs or video of significant St. John's events such as: Liturgical services, ground breaking, variety shows, Christmas pageants, bazaars, and the like.

Photos from Museum Road and Hudson Street would be especially helpful.

Please submit them to me in an envelope with your name on them. All photos and video will be returned. I could use these *AS SOON AS POSSIBLE*. Thank you in advance for your help. Wayne Zahka, Chairperson, 100th year Historical Review

From the Virgin Mary Society... The ladies of the VMS wish to extend a special thank you to all the women who came and helped us cook and bake for the bazaar.

The ladies from our sister parishes will meet at St. John's on Saturday January 20th, 2007. All ladies of the parish are welcome. Please give your name to any member of the VMS. Weather permitting; we are planning our annual sfeeha sale in the spring. Watch for details in the Sunday bulletin and the next issue of *The Torchbearer*. I wish all of you a happy and healthy holiday. Yours in Christ, Lillian H. Khouri

From the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch...

The annual Christmas Party for the Diocese of Worcester and New England will take place on Sunday, January 7, 2007 at Byblos Restaurant in Norwood, MA. The menu will include mazza, lamb kabob, chicken and hushweh, zalabee and other Epiphany sweets.

The Order sponsored November's Family Night and showed "The Ancient Church," a film that looks at the historical events that led to the Great Schism, the Protestant Reformation, and the survival of the Orthodox Church over the past two thousand years.

It is now time to turn our efforts towards St. John's Centennial. We hope to have a record

number of new members for Metropolitan Philip's visit on October 7, 2007. Soon The Order will start approaching potential members to ask for their participation. Please receive these inquiries graciously and search your heart to see if it is time for you to join. Many of us have received many blessings from our church and joining The Order is another way to "give back." If you are grateful for your children going to our wonderful Church School, or Antiochian Village, or Teen SOYO, keep in mind that The Order provides funding for these and many other projects that benefit our church.

Finally, there is a new address for The Order's Archdiocesan website. Check it out at www.orderofstignatius.org. Christine Bezreh

From the Parent Guild... We have been busy this past fall with the first three Family Nights. If you haven't yet attended one of the Family Nights, please try to come in January. Following Vespers, beautifully chanted by our own teens, we share a casual supper followed by a brief Guild meeting, while the teens meet and the "younger than teen" children have a great time with their own activities in the "OK" club. We are now busy planning for the luncheon to follow the church school Christmas Pageant taking place on December 17th following Diving Liturgy. In October, we held a bake sale to raise money towards our pledge to the Antiochian Village Capital Campaign. (A year ago, the Guild pledged \$5,000 over 5 years to this fund.)

Please look for details to come about the Annual Godparents luncheon, which will occur on Sunday, January 21, 2007. Please be

sure to make reservations as soon as you see news of the Godparents luncheon.

Please watch the bulletin for announcements of future meetings, and consider joining us! Wishing you a Blessed Christmas and a Healthy, Happy New Year. Bertina Kurker and Carol Hazerjian, Co-presidents

From the Fellowship of St. John the

Divine...The Fellowship of St. John the Divine will be holding their annual Super Bowl Sunday Bake Sale on February 4th following Liturgy. Proceeds will benefit the Children's Relief Fund and the sponsorship of Christian Kalash of Beirut, Lebanon. Anyone who is willing to bake, please call *Margaret Khouri @ 781. 329. 2201.*

From the Stewardship Committee...

The stewardship program is in full swing; we are excited to begin this new chapter in the history of our parish. Thanks to all of you who have turned in pledges for 2007. We hope to have 100% participation and will mark our progress on a "thermometer" at church. If your pledge form is not submitted by the end of the year, you will be contacted by telephone. Check out the St. John website for more Stewardship information (www.stjohnd.org/stewardship) There you will find details about tithing, frequently asked questions, a pledge form, and chart to use as a guideline for giving. While in the transition to this new program, please feel free to contact the Stewardship Committee if you have any questions about the new system. Debbie Greenstein, 508-528-2208, Elizabeth MacNeil, 781-449-5038, Christine Bezreh 781-449-1230

Liturgical notes...

❖ To celebrate the Feast of our Lord's Theophany, the blessing of water will take place on Saturday, January 6th at the Divine Liturgy, which begins at 9 am. The staff and students of Theophany School of Needham will join us and host a light collation after liturgy.

❖ Great Lent starts on Monday, February 19th and Holy Pascha (Easter) is on Sunday, April 8th. More information will follow in the next issue of *The Torchbearer*. The deadline for this issue is Friday, February 2nd.

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Sunday Services: Matins 9 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10 a.m.

Church Office Hours...Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
The deadline for the Sunday bulletin is Thursday at 10 a.m.
Please plan accordingly.

DEADLINE for the Lenten issue *Torchbearer* will be February 2nd, 2007.

Please consult the Weekly Sunday Bulletin for any changes, corrections, etc.